



May 5, 2026

Arcadia United Methodist Church in Paducah, KY is happy to report the success of its GOOYA program that we began the beginning of September of 2025. We had a Leadership Board Visioning & Planning session in January of 2025. As a small church with an older population, we were challenged by an article entitled “50 Ways To Take Church To The Community”. After a lot of discussion and prayer, we realized that one of the best mission fields in the city was steps across the street from us...Paducah Middle School. Our proposed goal was to reach the parents and caregivers of the students as our church parking lot had more cars in it during pick-up time for the middle school than it did for morning worship services.

“Get Out Of Your Auto” was born. We were going to provide drinks each Wednesday, to the parents, caregivers, and students. Our goal was to get the parents to engage with other parents as they waited for their students to get out of school. It was an immediate success! The students were enthusiastic, gracious and tons of fun. However, we noticed that usually NO adults were getting out of their cars. We were brave enough to poll several of the adults regarding why they did NOT get out of their cars. The reason was clear. The majority of those adults were not the actual parents of the students. They were older siblings, aunts & uncles, neighbors and especially grandparents who were not the primary stakeholders in the students’ lives at school.

So, we’ve learned and have pivoted. We began this ministry outside in the parking lot. However, our Fellowship Hall provided more space, more safety (than a parking lot), and more ease for our aging workers to set-up each week. This has made it easier for us to put out Christian resources, books, school supplies and a box for prayer requests. The students have utilized the prayer request box nearly every week. Other churches, businesses and individuals have discovered what we’re doing and we’ve been blessed to have donations of cupcakes, chips, cookies and other treats for the students.

Just recently we have put up posters inviting students to become acolytes, tech team assistants, and choir members. We are having success in those areas that we never expected. We have so many ideas brewing for next year’s GOOYA, including a name change. We didn’t want to change the acronym because the students routinely enter the fellowship hall happily screaming “It’s GOOYA Day!” So, beginning next school year, the name will be “Guiding Our Own Youth Ahead”. We are praising God for the success of this year and praying for guidance as we continue to support the middle school community next year. We are blessed!

Article submitted by Gaye Fisher

Arcadia United Methodist Church member

GOOYA

Arcadia UMC's "Guiding Our Own Students Ahead" after school snack program at Paducah Middle School, Paducah KY



